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Draft report

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Addendum

Coordination questions

The United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (item 5(c))

1. At its 10th meeting, on 5 June 1998, the Committee considered the progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa for the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (E/AC.51/1998/7).

Discussion

2. The view was expressed that the progress report had shortcomings, among others that no programmes in the two priority areas of regional cooperation and integration and economic diversification requested by the Committee at its thirty-seventh session were elaborated, and that throughout the report no concrete results were provided.

3. It was also felt that the progress report should have been more analytical than descriptive, and that language used in some paragraphs of the report, for example paragraphs 11 (a) and 12, was not the kind of language that should be used in United Nations reports.

4. It was further deplored that the progress report did not provide information on additional resources mobilized by the Special Initiative and urged that more resources be made available for its implementation. Dissatisfaction was expressed about the fact that in the only instance where the report tried to provide figures, which was the health sector, it was mentioned that to support the development of that sector in 10 African countries,

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about $3.5 billion was needed, of which more than half would have to be provided by the countries themselves and the remaining $1.5 billion would have to be mobilized by donors, including $500 million that might be provided by the World Bank.

5. Regarding the specific recommendations made by the Committee at its previous session,[1] satisfaction was expressed at the public awareness role exercised by the Secretary-General, but concern was voiced as to whether the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had properly carried out their tasks in that respect. The need to rationalize the various instruments being used in the field, namely, the United Nations development assistance frameworks, the country strategy notes and other sectoral programmes, was emphasized. It was also felt that the linkage between the Special Initiative and the development assistance frameworks and country strategy notes should be more concrete and better structured.

6. The need to promote national ownership of the Special Initiative by African countries was stressed, and concern was expressed that a lot remained to be done to achieve that objective. The need to build partnership around national priorities, strategies and programmes was underscored. In that regard, it was stated that African countries must define their own priorities and programmes based on their respective needs. Views were expressed that the spirit of such partnership must reflect respect for the principle of sovereign equality of States.

7. Concern was voiced that the priority areas mentioned in the report were not exhaustive and, therefore, did not cover all the areas of concern of the African countries. It was requested that the priority areas of the Special Initiative should be those laid down by the Member States in the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. The view was expressed that the areas of priority should include, among others, poverty eradication, which should be the paramount activity within the United Nations system and without which success of the Special Initiative could not be measured, regional cooperation and integration, economic diversification, agricultural development and food security, soil degradation, water, trade and investment. Others welcomed the refocusing of the Special Initiative on areas where results had been achieved and underscored the need for the Special Initiative to concentrate on the priority areas of education, health, governance, harnessing information technology for development, gender and population.

8. It was underlined that the Special Initiative should serve as an instrument of coordination at various levels, including the national level and as a means to rationalize the utilization of resources made available to Africa. In that connection, the importance of coordination between the Special Initiative and bilateral organizations at the field level was emphasized. The view was expressed that the involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions was an important aspect of the overall coordination of development aid in Africa.

9. The view was expressed that there was a need to intensify the synergy between the Special Initiative and other programmes and initiatives, including those of the countries concerned. On the one hand, concern was expressed about the existence of two secretariats within the United Nations system and about whether a secretariat for the Special Initiative separate from the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries was needed; on the other hand, it was noted that the two secretariats performed different functions, with the Office of the Special Coordinator providing support to intergovernmental bodies and consideration of issues related to African development, and the Special Initiative secretariat providing coordination and planning for programmes.

10. The view was expressed that it was necessary to use concrete indicators of performance to measure progress made in the implementation of the Special Initiative and to analyse the lessons learned with a view to more efficient and effective implementation of the Special Initiative. It was emphasized that if the Special Initiative were to achieve its implementation in the priority areas indicated above, it would be important to focus more on operational activities than on organizing colloquia, seminars and workshops.

11. Concern was voiced about the challenges that the Special Initiative was facing in identifying in a convincing manner its added value in view of declining official development assistance and marginal investment flows for Africa, its mainstreaming within the United Nations system and the building of sustainable partnerships for Africa through the Special Initiative. It was stated that the success and effectiveness of the Special Initiative were to be judged in terms of its ability to address those challenges.

12. With respect to the linkage between the Special Initiative and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, it was stressed that the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the New Agenda stated in its report[2] that the Special Initiative was complementary to the New Agenda and was designed to facilitate its implementation and the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits as they related to Africa, and that the Special Initiative might also become an impetus for the implementation of all elements of the New Agenda. It was furthermore recalled that the Assembly, in its resolution 51/32 of 6 December 1996, adopted the conclusions of the Ad Hoc Committee and requested the Secretary-General, pending the final review and appraisal of the New Agenda in 2002, to submit to it at its fifty-third and fifty-fifth sessions a progress report. Reference was also made to the Agenda for Development,[3] which stated that the United Nations system had a major role to play in coordinating and implementing activities that addressed the critical situation in Africa, including through the implementation of the New Agenda and the follow-up of the outcome of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development and other related initiatives. In order fully to comply with Assembly decisions and resolutions concerning United Nations activities in Africa, it was emphasized that reference should be made in the future in all United Nations documents to the implementation of the New Agenda through the Special Initiative on Africa.

Conclusion and recommendations

13. The Committee took note of the progress report of the Secretary-General and of the results achieved in the implementation of the Special Initiative.

14. The Committee considered that those results were interesting and constituted some progress compared with the previous situation. They were nonetheless insufficient as regards the number of countries and the limited areas covered so far.

15. The Committee underlined that the development of Africa was one of the priorities of the medium-term plan and that the critical economic situation of Africa was of serious concern to the international community in general.

16. The Committee also underlined that the General Assembly would undertake the final review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda in 2002.

17. The Committee recommended that the Administrative Committee on Coordination be requested to intensify its efforts to mobilize fully the analytical and operational capacities and capabilities of the United Nations system at the service of the Special Initiative for the implementation of the New Agenda, in order to achieve coverage of the maximum number of countries and areas of activity.

18. The Committee recommended that the different lead agencies be called upon, under the coordination of the Steering Committee, to develop, in their respective areas, a common strategic framework for action that analyses and highlights the problems, sets the goals, determines the respective contributions of organizations, indicates necessary resources and sets reference points, including performance indicators, in order to permit an effective follow-up of results, taking as the starting point the final review and appraisal of the New Agenda in 2002 and implied incentive measures.

19. The Committee recommended that the Secretariat of the Special Initiative be strengthened, and especially that its working relations be tightened with the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries, the substantive divisions of ECA and the focal points of agencies and organizations, including, in case of need, the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Africa's Critical Economic Situation, Recovery and Development, and by allocating to it the necessary resources.

20. In the area of coordination, the Committee took note of the actions undertaken in response to the recommendations made at its thirty-seventh session. It requested that efforts be intensified in that respect, in particular as regards the orientation and advocacy role of the Secretary-General, the follow-up and catalytic role of the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries and the operational role of UNDP and ECA. The Committee requested that further coordination measures aimed at establishing a dynamic and a common framework of action be strengthened at the field level. This framework should indicate the contributions of the different partners.

21. Regarding the linkages between the Special Initiative and the New Agenda, the Committee recommended that they be further clarified, and reaffirmed that the Special Initiative was the dynamic instrument for the implementation of the New Agenda. The Committee recalled the recommendation made at its thirty-seventh session that programmes should be rapidly prepared in the two priority areas of regional cooperation and integration and economic diversification.

22. The Committee recommended that efforts be intensified in order to establish a vigorous plan of increased mobilization of resources directed at the eradication of poverty, economic development, substantial reduction of debt, institution of partnership innovations, market access and trade opportunities, mobilization of domestic resources and allocation of additional resources. In that regard, the Committee called for the greater involvement of Bretton Woods Institutions in the increased mobilization of resources for capacity-building of African countries.

23. The Committee requested that a new progress report on the implementation of the Special Initiative be submitted for consideration at its thirty-ninth session, including measures taken in response to the foregoing recommendations.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/52/16), paras. 356 and 357.

[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 48* (A/51/48), para. 7.

[3] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 45* (A/51/45), annex.